



DENIM DAY

STEP FORWARD

TAKE A STAND AGAINST RAPE

Denim Day Talking Points

Myth:		Rape doesn't happen very often.
	Truth:	1 in 5 women reported she had been raped or physically or sexually assaulted in her lifetime (Commonwealth Fund, <i>Health Concerns Across a Woman's Lifespan: 1998 Survey of Women's Health</i> , May 1999).
Myth:		Women lead men on. Sometimes they are just asking to be raped.
	Truth:	No one ever asks to be raped. Forcing someone to engage in sexual activity against his or her will is sexual assault – regardless of the way that person dresses or acts.
Myth:		Women encourage rape by wearing sexy, suggestive clothing. If you dress conservatively you are less likely to be raped.
	Truth:	Research consistently shows that rape is about a rapist's need to feel power and control, not what a rape victim wears. In fact, women and girls have been raped while wearing everything from pajamas to business suits.
Myth:		A woman cannot be raped if she wears jeans because she would have to help remove them.
	Truth:	Dress or behavior can never be a justification for an assault on another.
Myth:		Most rapes occur in a dark alley by a stranger.
	Truth:	73% of sexual assaults were perpetrated by a non-stranger, 38% were a friend or acquaintance of the victim, 28% were an intimate partner and 7% were another relative (<i>National Crime Victimization Survey, 2005</i>)
Myth:		If a woman consents to sex with someone once, she can't be raped by him. If she knows or is in a relationship with him, she can't be raped.
	Truth:	Rape is coerced sex committed against someone's will, regardless of any existing or previous relationship between the rapist and the victim.
Myth:		He's rich, good looking and an athlete. Anyone would want to be with him. He couldn't be a rapist.
	Truth:	Convicted rapists and murderers who rape, come from all backgrounds, can look like anyone, are frequently married or with steady partner and some are athletes. Money and success do not guarantee that someone is not a rapist.
Myth:		It's okay for a man to force a woman to have sex with him if she makes him excited.
	Truth:	This attitude suggests that men are not capable of controlling themselves and it is her fault that he cannot do so. It further suggests that females must ultimately bear the responsibility and actions of male sexual urges.
Myth:		There is a "right way" to respond to rape. Anyone can prevent rape if they really wanted to. No one can be raped against his or her will.
	Truth:	Rape is a violent crime committed by someone who may seem "normal" or charming and may be known to the victim. The rapist chooses the time and method of the attack, not the victim. Rape victims have fought back and broken free, but a rape victim's first priority is to survive.
Myth:		Men can't be raped.
	Truth:	In 2003, one in every ten rape victims were male. (<i>2003 National Crime Victimization Study</i>)
Myth:		I don't know anyone who's ever been raped.
	Truth:	Rape victims are doctors, lawyers, nurses, military personnel, cooks, accountants or anyone. Less than one-third of rape and sexual assaults are reported to the police.

So what do we do? Let's start by building healthy and respectful relationships.

- **Relationships are not perfect** – Feeling angry, hurt or upset at times is normal. But feeling scared, humiliated, pressured or controlled is not the way a relationship should make you feel. Instead, you should feel loved, respected and free to be yourself.

Action Step: Support your significant other through the language you use and the actions you take. Respect your partner and your partner's decisions, including those involving sex. Never force someone to engage in sexual activity. This is sexual assault, whether you are dating, married, living together as a couple or are just friends.

- **Talk with each other** – communication is essential in health relationships. Couples should take time to talk with each other – respect each other's opinions and feel comfortable asking each other questions even about sex.

Action Step: Take time to talk and listen to your boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse. Express your thoughts and feelings clearly and directly, without intentionally hurting or disrespecting each other. Even if you disagree, never pressure your significant other.

- **Family matters** – Families are an important part of everyone's lives. Family members help shape beliefs, provide support, and can serve as role models. But sometimes families can reinforce violent behavior. Actions with intent to abuse, humiliate, harass or degrade another lead to unhealthy relationships. Children learn what they see and hear. Without healthy relationships from which to learn, children can grow up to act out and be in sexually abusive relationships (American Psychological Association, 1996).

Action Step: Simple changes in the way you act in front of your children can prevent sexual violence. For instance, speak up when you see your son or daughter mistreat others physically or emotionally. Talk with your children about what it means to be in a healthy relationship where couples do not hurt each other physically, sexually or emotionally (American Psychological Association, 1996).

- **Friends count** – Friends are an important source of support and advice. Friends play a powerful role in shaping attitudes, beliefs and behaviors about rape and sexual violence. Friends should speak up when they know or see a friend insist on sex. Talk with each other about what it means to give and receive respect.

Action Step: Friends should not accept excuses for violent acts committed by people they love. Confront the abuser – only if you can do it safely. Let the abuser know you don't approve of the behavior; and discuss changes that can be made to have more productive, healthy relationships (Golding, Wilsnack and Cooper, 2002).

- **Building blocks** – Trust, honesty and respect among friends, family and other play a critical role in healthy relationships. Respect your boyfriend, girlfriend, husband or wife's wishes when it comes to their body. Never ignore protests and respect your partner's right to say "no" to things that cause discomfort.

Action Step: Treat your wife, husband, boyfriend, girlfriend, friends and family with the same trust, honesty and respect that you would want. Your partner does not need to be "putting up a good fight" to be raped. (Golding, Wilsnack and Cooper, 2002).

- **Violence is Never Okay** – Intentional violence is never the victim's fault. Violence doesn't mean physical abuse. Abusive relationships can occur any time someone intentionally attacks you physically, sexually or psychologically. Abuse is never okay. Never make light of abuse or try to justify or excuse violent behavior by blaming the victim.

Action Step: Express your thoughts and feelings clearly, directly and respectfully. Whatever the circumstance, no one ever asks to be raped. Respect your boyfriend, girlfriend, wife or husband. Don't impose your will because you think your partner will like it, that you deserve it or that you think your partner is asking for sex.